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ACTION EAP-00

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| INFO | LOG-00  | NP-00   | AID-00  | AMAD-00 | ACQ-00  | CIAE-00 | DINT-00 |
|      | DODE-00 | DOEE-00 | PERC-00 | SRPP-00 | DS-00   | EB-00   | ED-01   |
|      | FBIE-00 | VC-00   | HHS-01  | H-01    | TEDE-00 | INR-00  | IO-00   |
|      | LAB-01  | L-00    | VCE-00  | AC-01   | NSAE-00 | OIC-02  | OMB-01  |
|      | OPIC-01 | PA-00   | PM-00   | PRS-00  | ACE-00  | P-00    | SP-00   |
|      | STR-00  | TRSE-00 | USIE-00 | PMB-00  | DSCC-00 | PRM-00  | DRL-02  |
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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7385  
INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
NSC WASHDC  
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 002090

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E.O. 12958; DECL. 08/27/2012  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#) [ETMIN](#) [HUMANR](#) [RELFREE](#)  
SUBJECT: DAK LAK PROVINCE UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS  
HARASSMENT

REF: HCMC 0394

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CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL HO CHI MINH CITY EMI  
LYNN YAMAUCHI FOR REASON 1.5 (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A PROTESTANT PASTOR FROM DAK LAK PROVINCE RECENTLY MET WITH CONGENOFFS TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT SITUATION THERE, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTING TO "ERADICATE" PROTESTANTISM. HE SAID PROTESTANT FAMILIES WERE NOW FORBIDDEN TO WORSHIP TOGETHER IN GROUPS AND HAD BEEN TOLD - AT LEAST IN ONE VILLAGE -- THEY COULD NOT TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE PROVINCE. HE BELIEVES IT IS BECAUSE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES FEAR THESE VILLAGERS WILL TRAVEL TO HO CHI MINH CITY TO TELL THE CONSULATE GENERAL ABOUT THEIR SITUATION. AT THE SAME TIME, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE - NO BEATINGS, BROKEN FINGERS, ETC., AS WE HAVE HEARD IN OTHER CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CASES. THE PASTOR WAS AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE VALUE OF USG TRAVEL TO THE HIGHLANDS, NOTING "IT INCREASES PROBLEMS FOR US." AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE 90-MINUTE MEETING, THE PASTOR ASKED CONGEN FOR "FUNDS" TO HELP DEFRAY THE COST OF HIS TRIP TO HO CHI MINH CITY TO IMPART THIS INFORMATION. END SUMMARY

12. (C) PASTOR Y SIOK NIE (ALSO CALLED BY HIS CHRISTIAN NAME, "STEVENS") WAS INTRODUCED TO CONGENOFFS BY A HO CHI MINH CITY CONTACT, DR. SIU YA KOP (ALSO CALLED BY HIS CHRISTIAN NAME, "DR. JAKUB"), WHO IS FAIRLY WELL KNOWN TO POST. JAKUB SAID THE PASTOR WAS HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW.

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13. (C) ACCORDING TO PASTOR STEVENS, RECENTLY DAK LAK PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES AT ALL LEVELS (PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT, COMMUNE, VILLAGE, HAMLET) HAVE CRACKED DOWN ON PROTESTANTS WHO ARE PRACTICING OUTSIDE THE "LEGAL" BOUNDARIES OF A RECOGNIZED RELIGION. CURRENTLY, ONLY TWO (ONE ETHNIC MINORITY AND ONE VIETNAMESE KINH) PROTESTANT CHURCHES OUT OF THE 400-PLUS CONGREGATIONS WERE APPROVED. STEVENS IMPLIED, BUT DID NOT SPECIFICALLY STATE, THAT THIS WAS BY CHOICE OF THE CHURCH/CONGREGATION, NOT BECAUSE THE COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OR ANY GOVERNMENT ENTITY HAD REJECTED AN APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL. PROTESTANT FAMILIES HAVE BEEN WARNED BY AUTHORITIES NOT TO WORSHIP TOGETHER AT HOUSE CHURCHES OR IN TRADITIONAL "RONG" MEETING HOUSES. BUT IN FACT, STEVENS SAID THEY CONTINUED TO DO SO WITHOUT INTERFERENCE.

14. (C) PASTOR STEVENS ALSO TURNED OVER VIETNAMESE-

LANGUAGE DOCUMENTS, WHICH WERE TESTIMONIES FROM OTHER PROTESTANT BELIEVERS ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT BY THE POLICE. WHILE ALL THE INDIVIDUALS ALLEGED HARASSMENT - PHONE CALLS, VISITS TO THEIR HOMES OR WORKPLACES, PRESSURE TO RENOUNCE THEIR FAITH OR ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS ILLOGICAL, CONFISCATION OF RELIGIOUS ITEMS - THERE WERE NO COMPLAINTS OF PHYSICAL HARM. OTHER DOCUMENTS WERE LETTERS OF PROTEST SENT TO VARIOUS COMMUNIST PARTY AND GVN AGENCIES, NOTABLY THE CENTRAL PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, THE DAK LAK PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE, AND THE DAK LAK PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS. THE WRITERS HAD RECEIVED EITHER NO RESPONSE

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OR A RESPONSE DIRECTING THEM TO MAKE A POLICE REPORT, ACCORDING TO STEVENS.

15. (C) ONE UNSIGNED DOCUMENT, PERHAPS A PAGE TAKEN FROM A SCHOOL NOTEBOOK, CONTAINED NOTES FROM A COURSE CONDUCTED BY THE PROVINCIAL COMMUNIST PARTY'S PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE. THE WRITER SAYS THAT OPPONENTS OF THE VIETNAMESE REGIME ARE "PUPPETS OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE." FURTHER, THE OPPONENTS' GOAL IS TO DIVIDE VIETNAM INTO FOUR PARTS - H'MONG, DEGA, KHMER KROM, AND CHAMPA. THE GVN IS "AWARE THAT THE DEGA PROTESTANTS CHANGED THEIR NAME TO TAY NGUYEN PROTESTANTS AFTER THE FEBRUARY 2001 DISTURBANCES." THE GVN'S OBJECTIVE IS TO ERADICATE PROTESTANTISM BY 2005, ACCORDING TO THESE NOTES.

16. (C) PASTOR STEVENS CLAIMED THAT EA KAR VILLAGERS HAD BEEN FORBIDDEN TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE DAK LAK PROVINCE. HE HIMSELF HAD OBTAINED PERMISSION TO TRAVEL TO HCMC UNDER THE GUISE OF VISITING HIS SON HERE. HE SAID HE SUSPECTED THE REAL REASON AUTHORITIES DID NOT WANT VILLAGERS TO TRAVEL TO HCMC WAS BECAUSE THEY FEARED THEY WOULD GO TO THE CONSULATE AND RELATE THEIR SITUATION.

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7386  
INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
NSC WASHDC  
USMISSION GENEVA

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17. (C) PASTOR STEVENS ALSO ASKED CONGENOFFS WHY THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO COME TO AN EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE AT

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HIS CHURCH JUST OUTSIDE BUON ME THUOT, THE DAK LAK PROVINCIAL CAPITAL. HE SAID THAT CONGREGATION MEMBERS HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE VISIT AND HAD PREPARED A WELCOME. ON EASTER MORNING, THEY WERE TOLD THAT CONGENOFFS WERE "DELAYED", BUT THEY WAITED UNTIL MIDNIGHT JUST IN CASE. [CONGEN NOTE: PER REFTEL, AMBASSADOR BURGHARDT, CG, AND CONGENOFFS TRAVELED TO THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OVER THE EASTER WEEKEND OF MARCH 30-31. THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OFFICE IN HCMC HAD INFORMED CONGEN THAT KON TUM PROVINCE WOULD RECEIVE THEM FOR AN EASTER CHURCH SERVICE, BUT TO SPLIT UP THE GROUP BETWEEN KON TUM AND BUON ME THUOT (FIVE HOURS APART BY CAR) WOULD BE A LOGISTICAL PROBLEM. WHETHER THIS DECISION WAS EVER CONVEYED TO DAK LAK PROVINCE AUTHORITIES, OR WHETHER THERE IS A MORE NEFARIOUS REASON BEHIND THIS BREAKDOWN IN COMMUNICATION, WE DO NOT KNOW. END NOTE.] CONGENOFFS APOLOGIZED FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING AND DISAPPOINTMENT, WHILE EXPRESSING SURPRISE, SINCE WE HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE KON TUM DECISION TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE TRIP TOOK PLACE.

18. (C) COMMENT: CONGEN NOTES THAT THESE ABOVE STORIES OF HARASSMENT ARE SIMILAR, THOUGH LESS DRAMATIC, THAN PREVIOUS ONES THAT WE HAVE REPORTED ON. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT RELIGIOUS HARASSMENT CONTINUES IN SOME PARTS OF THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS. HOWEVER, THE PASTORS AND BELIEVERS THERE SEEM TO CONSIDER ALL HARASSMENT - AS ABHORRENT AS IT MAY BE - TO BE PERSECUTION. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE VALUE OF USG VISITS TO THE TROUBLED PROVINCES, PASTOR STEVENS WAS FORTHRIGHT: "YOUR VISITS CREATE MORE PROBLEMS FOR US,  
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BUT WE REALIZE IT IS PART OF YOUR DUTY TO GO INVESTIGATE SITUATIONS." WHEN PRESSED AS TO WHETHER HE MEANT WE SHOULD MAKE NO FURTHER VISITS, STEVENS BECAME AMBIVALENT: "WELL, THEY WILL NEVER ALLOW YOU TO SEE THE TRUTH, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION ABOUT THE VALUE OF A VISIT."

19. (C) OF FURTHER CONCERN WAS THE REQUEST FOR MONEY. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT ANY OF OUR FIRST OR SECONDHAND SOURCES HAD REQUESTED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THEIR "TRAVEL COSTS." CONGEN UNDERSTANDS THAT LIFE IS HARD FOR HOUSE CHURCH PASTORS, ESPECIALLY IF THEIR CONGREGATION'S NUMBERS ARE DIMINISHING DUE TO HARASSMENT. HOWEVER, THE REQUEST FOR USD\$33 FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES WAS HIGH - FOR A PROVINCE WHERE THE AVERAGE PER CAPITA INCOME IS UNDER USD\$250. CONGENOFFS EXPLAINED THEY COULD NOT PAY FOR TRAVEL COSTS, AND IN ANY CASE WOULD NOT WANT ANY SUGGESTION OF AN APPEARANCE OF THE USG PAYING FOR INFORMATION. CONGENOFFS URGED PASTOR STEVENS TO FOLLOW HIS OWN CONSCIENCE ON PROVIDING INFORMATION TO US. CONGENOFFS ALSO SAID THEY COULD NOT SET A PRECEDENT BY DONATING PERSONAL MONIES TO THE PASTOR. CONGEN CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT RELIABLE SECONDHAND INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS CARRIED DOWN FROM THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS ARE VALUABLE REPORTING MATERIALS, AND WOULD BE DISMAYED IF THESE SOURCES DRIED UP. DR. JAKUB EXPRESSED SHOCK AT HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW'S REQUEST, AND EMPHATICALLY TOLD CONGENOFFS AFTER THE MEETING AND IN A FOLLOW UP PHONE CALL THAT HE HAD HAD NO IDEA PASTOR STEVENS WOULD ASK FOR MONEY.

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110. (C) IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, CONGENOFFS HAVE RECEIVED A NUMBER OF E-MAIL AND FAX MESSAGES FROM PROTESTANT PASTORS ABOUT EVERY POLICE DETENTION (SOME LASTING AN HOUR OR LESS), "INVITATION TO APPEAR AT THE POLICE STATION," HOUSE SEARCH (THE POLICE SOMETIMES CARRY AWAY TELEVISION SETS, RADIOS, ETC.), OR PHONE CALL WARNING PEOPLE "NOT TO FOLLOW DANGEROUS/ILLEGAL RELIGIONS." MESSAGES SOMETIMES COME ANONYMOUSLY VIA THE MESSAGING DEVICE ON CONGENOFFS MOBILE PHONES. CG HCMC IS SYMPATHETIC TO THESE CONCERNS, BUT LACKS THE RESOURCES TO FOLLOW UP ON EACH REPORT OR TO TRACK DOWN THE ANONYMOUS ONES. THESE INCIDENTS ARE ALL RECORDED, AND WILL BE REFLECTED IN OUR ANNUAL FREEDOM OF RELIGION REPORT.

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